



Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Need

The Right-of-Way Improvements Manual is an on-line resource developed by the City of Seattle to help property owners, developers, architects, landscape architects, and engineers involved with the design, permitting and construction of improvements to Seattle's street right-of-way.

The Right-of-Way Improvements Manual considers, and attempts to balance the access and mobility needs of all users of the street right-of-way: pedestrians, non-motorized vehicles, automobiles, transit, and freight. Procedures and design criteria were developed keeping in mind the critical balance among the following: safety, the preservation and maintenance of roadway infrastructure and utility services, and preserving our environment.

Knowing that all projects have site specific opportunities and constraints, the Right-of-Way Improvements Manual articulates the City's design criteria for street right-of-way improvements and describes a deviation process to achieve flexibility when practical.

1.2 Authority

The Right-of-Way Improvements Manual establishes and documents the policies, procedures and practices for how the City manages physical improvements in the street right-of-way and on public property. It attempts to provide a comprehensive resource for all procedures, standards and guidelines affecting physical changes in the street right-of-way. It replaces the existing City of Seattle Street Improvement Manual (1991, DCLU/SED DR #30-90/91-4).

The Right-of-Way Improvements Manual summarizes the City of Seattle's Land Use Code requirements ([Title 23 of the Seattle Municipal Code](#)) for street and alley improvements and presents specific criteria for design and installation. In addition to requirements, the Right-of-Way Improvements Manual also includes additional resources and guidelines for doing work in the street right-of-way including information on project permitting, construction requirements and street design guidelines. Refer to the chapter summaries in [Section 1.3 Organization](#) for the authority of information in each chapter.

1.3 Organization

The Right-of-Way Improvements Manual is an on-line resource. As such it provides the ability to view, print and link to a wide range of information about making improvements in the street right-of-way. This section summarizes the organization of the Right-of-Way Improvements Manual and the contents of each chapter. A document map is also included for easy reference. The Right-of-Way Improvements Manual is organized as follows:

[The Right-of-Way Improvements Manual Home Page](#): Information about street right-of-way permits begins on the website home page. Here you will find a number of resources and links that are the global navigation of the website—meaning they are available on every page. They include a glossary of terms, online help, frequently asked questions, and contact information for key resources.

[Chapter 1 Introduction](#) provides an overview of the Right-of-Way Improvements Manual purpose and

need and defines the authority, roles and responsibilities of the various City departments that have oversight of the street right-of-way. This chapter also includes information on the relationship between the Right-of-Way Improvements Manual and other regulations and guidelines, as well as a description of the revision process and update schedule.

[Chapter 2 Procedures, Permitting Process and Approvals for Street Right-of-Way Improvements](#) is designed to help navigate the process for preparing permits for street right-of-way improvements. These include resources to guide the applicant through the environmental review, design review or historic district review processes, as well as the steps needed to prepare a permit application. Permit forms and other helpful tools are also included and can be downloaded directly from this site. This chapter also describes the information which must be submitted to request a deviation from street improvement requirements. The information in this chapter constitutes the City of Seattle's official permitting process for work in the street right-of-way.

[Chapter 3 Street Right-of-Way Improvement Requirements](#) summarizes the City of Seattle's Land Use Code requirements (Seattle Municipal Code Title 23) for street and alley improvements. It explains the importance of the various types of street and alley improvements, and explains how to make the best use of this Manual to determine the type and extent of improvements required by the Land Use Code. It describes the specific improvement requirements for different types of streets and alleys in different zones, based on the requirements in the Land Use Code. These requirements are summarized in a series of tables and drawings for easy reference. The information in this chapter constitutes a set of requirements that are officially adopted by the Right-of-Way Improvements Manual Joint Department of Planning and Development (DPD)/Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) Director's Rule # 30-90/91-4.

[Chapter 4 Design Criteria](#) provides technical information and design criteria for specific elements of the street right-of-way, such as grading, pavement type and depth, street tree placement, and utility locations. Design criteria have been established so that streets and sidewalks used by the public and maintained with public funds will meet standards for operating efficiency, and will hold up to long-term use with minimum maintenance and repair. These requirements and criteria pertain to streets and alleys that are under the jurisdiction of the Seattle Department of Transportation. They also pertain to private streets and alleys that will serve development projects. A deviation request from the design criteria in this chapter may be requested from the City of Seattle for certain streets in unusual situations, or for certain development projects for which the requirements or design criteria would be unreasonable. The information in this chapter constitutes a set of requirements that are officially adopted by the Right-of-Way Improvements Manual Joint DPD/SDOT Director's Rule # 30-90/91-4.

[Chapter 5 Construction and Maintenance](#) defines the information needed for working in the street right-of-way including links to Seattle's Traffic Control Manual for In Street Work and the Pavement Opening and Restoration Rules (authorized by Ordinance # 118751).

[Chapter 6 Streetscape Design Guidelines](#) describes design guidelines that may be of interest to project applicants, but do not represent requirements. Many are neighborhood specific, such as Green Street, light rail station area plans and street design concept plans. Others define City programs that apply to street rights-of-way but are not required, such as traffic calming and natural drainage system guidelines.

1.4 Relationship to Other Standards and Guidelines

The Right-of-Way Improvements Manual is one of many resources for a project applicant proposing to do work in the street right-of-way. Information in the Manual is:

- Consistent with citywide regulatory documents such as the [Seattle Municipal Code](#) and [City of Seattle Standard Plans and Specifications](#).
- Consistent with applicable federal, state, regional and local regulatory requirements.

- Consistent with related citywide plans, such as the [Comprehensive Plan](#), the [Transportation Strategic Plan](#) and [Comprehensive Drainage Plan](#).

Compliance with certain federal standards including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the [Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices \(MUTCD\)](#) is necessary for all work done in the street right-of-way. The City of Seattle recognizes the [Washington State City/County Design Standards](#) as the basic set of requirements for roadway work in the street right-of-way.

1.5 Departmental Roles and Responsibilities

The City of Seattle is made up of a number of departments. The following have a regulatory and permitting role with regard to the street right-of-way in Seattle:

[Seattle Department of Transportation \(SDOT\)](#) plans for, builds, maintains and operates Seattle's \$8 billion transportation infrastructure. To further the goal to get Seattle moving, the department manages short- and long-term transportation investments that connect the City with the region. SDOT's mission is to deliver a safe and reliable transportation system that enhances Seattle's environment and economic vitality. SDOT is responsible for building, operating and maintaining transportation facilities in the street right-of-way. SDOT also reviews and issues permits to manage the use of the street right-of-way, including permitting improvements to the street infrastructure performed by developers and others agencies. City of Seattle Inspectors are responsible for enforcing the Ordinances; City Specifications; and the Street and Sidewalk Pavement Opening and Restoration Rules. This is to ensure that all construction, safety, and accessibility requirements of a permit are met as approved.

The Seattle [Department of Planning and Development \(DPD\)](#) develops, administers, and enforces standards for land use, design, construction, and housing within Seattle city limits. DPD is also responsible for long-range planning. With regard to the street right-of-way, DPD reviews the scope of street improvements required of adjacent development. DPD also reviews and issues permits for new or revised curbcuts, structural building overhangs, sidewalk cafes, commercial signs, and any shoreline substantial development permits when required for work in the street right-of-way. DPD also oversees the Design and Planning Commissions as well as the Design Review Board.

[Seattle Public Utilities \(SPU\)](#) provides more than 1.3 million customers in King County with a reliable water supply, as well as essential sewer, drainage, and solid waste services for the City of Seattle. To deliver these basic services, Seattle Public Utilities relies on a system of pipes, reservoirs, and disposal and recycling stations. In the street right-of-way, SPU is responsible for drainage facilities and conveyance systems, water facilities (e.g., hydrants) and solid waste services. SPU has permitting and regulatory responsibility for utility services and utility construction work, including water quality certification, water availability certification, side sewer and drainage permit application review and code compliance review.

[Seattle City Light \(SCL\)](#) works to sustain and enhance the community's quality of life by providing excellent energy services to customers and to be the most customer-focused, competitive, efficient, innovative, environmentally responsible utility in the United States. In addition to its generating facilities, SCL is also responsible for building, operating, and maintaining its power transmission and distribution facilities in the street right-of-way in a fashion that is both safe and reliable. SCL is also charged with the responsibility of managing the use of space on its facilities. Customers wanting new or enlarged electrical services or wishing to attach their equipment to SCL's facilities must contact SCL and secure written permissions in advance.

[Seattle Parks and Recreation \(SPR\)](#) is responsible for development, maintenance and operation of over 6,000 acres of property including numerous historic parks, boulevards, open spaces, and recreation facilities. These include community centers, swimming/wading pools, play areas/courts and ball fields. Certain city streets have been officially designated as park boulevards. In addition to providing typical

transportation and street right-of-way functions and amenities, park boulevards provide scenic links throughout the city. Any development project on, or adjacent to a park boulevard must be reviewed and approved by SPR in addition to all other applicable review and approvals.

[Seattle Fire Department](#) responds to fire and medical emergencies, and is dependent upon the capability of the street network to handle traffic flows. The Fire Department reviews proposed street improvements, closures, etc. to identify potential negative impacts on response times. Private roads must be in accordance with Section 503 (Fire Apparatus Access Roads) and Appendix D of the Seattle Fire Code. Plans for building construction are routed from the Department of Planning and Development to the Fire Department's Fire Prevention Division for review of fire apparatus access and other fire code related issues. The Fire Department is also involved with large transportation projects such as Sound Transit Link Light Rail, and the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement project.

[Department of Neighborhoods \(DON\)](#) Office of Urban Conservation oversees Seattle's historic preservation program. The program's primary objectives are to encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of historic properties for public and private use; to promote the recognition, protection and enhancement of landmark buildings, objects and sites of historic, architectural and cultural significance in Seattle; and, to identify, protect, preserve and perpetuate the cultural, economic, historical and architectural qualities of historic landmarks and districts throughout the city.

1.6 Contact Information

Organization Name/Website	Phone
Department of Neighborhoods	(206) 684-CITY (2489)
Department of Planning & Development (DPD) General Information	(206) 864-8600
Seattle City Light General Information	(206) 684-3000
Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) General Information	(206) 684-ROAD (7623)
Seattle Fire Department	(206) 386-1400
Seattle Parks and Recreation General Information	(206)684-4075
Seattle Public Utilities General Information	(206) 684-3000

Additional contact information and resources are located in the [City of Seattle Staff Directory](#), which is searchable by Department, Division and individual staff.